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100 Years Ago in The Auk



From "The Labrador Duck:—a revised list of the extant specimens in North America, with some historical notes" by William Dutcher (1891, *Auk* 8: 201):

"THE OBJECT of this revised list is to bring before the ornithologists of North America the great desirability of search among the private collections of mounted birds, scattered throughout this country, for specimens of this species of Duck, which in all probability is now nearly, if not altogether extinct. A further object is to record the exact history of the extant specimens so far as it can be gathered at this late day. There are but few naturalists or sportsmen now living who have had any experience with the Labrador Duck in life, and these are one by one passing away. Of the life history of this interesting species but little is known, for when it was common there were but few, if any, observers in the field, and the science of ornithology had not advanced to its present high plane. As long ago as when Audubon was in Labrador (see his 'Birds of America') it was so rare that he did not meet with it and the great Wilson said of it: 'This is rather a scarce species on our coast.' [American Ornithology. Vol. III, 1829, p. 369.] Giraud, in his 'Birds of Long Island' says: 'With us it is rather rare.'

"It is true that at a later date than the above, say during the period from 1840 to 1860, there were apparently more of these Ducks seen than earlier.

"This, however, I think, may be easily explained as follows: during the later period there were a far greater number of scientific collectors, and there was a market demand for game and waterfowl which gave employment to professional gunners who shot and sent to market great numbers of birds. During the open season one can see hanging in our markets hundreds and sometimes thousands of Ducks of the commoner varieties; this has been the case for many years, perhaps to a lesser degree formerly because the demand was not then so great. . . [The paper then lists the location and condition of mounted specimens].

Vol. 8 (2) also included a fold-out map of the "Distribution of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker." The article was by Edwin M. Hasbrouck, "The present status of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker [Campephilus principalis]" (1891, Auk 8: 174-186).—Ed.